

Saratoga Foothill Club  
20399 Park Place  
Saratoga  
Santa Clara County  
California

HABS No. CA-2014

HABS,  
CAL,  
43-SARA,  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Architectural and Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20243

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. CA-2014

## SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB

Location: 20399 Park Place, Saratoga, Santa Clara County,  
California.

USGS Castle Rock Ridge Quadrangle: Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates: 10.586120.4123860.

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Saratoga Foothill Club.

Present Use: Clubhouse and community center.

Significance: The Saratoga Foothill Club, erected 1914-15, is a modestly scaled redwood building which, because of the bungalow style design and low, horizontal massing, blends in nicely with its residential surroundings. The one-story shingled structure is distinguished by carved trellises, projecting bracketed bays, and a circular multi-paned rose window set into the principal gable. It was designed by Berkeley architect Julia Morgan, the first woman to graduate from the School of Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, and Paris' École des Beaux-Arts. She designed more than a thousand buildings in the Bay area during the first half of the 20th century, and is known for her significant contribution to the development of the Bay Area Tradition, a California vernacular of small-scaled wooden structures derived from details of historic styles. The Foothill Club, organized in 1907, is the oldest social organization in Saratoga, established as a woman's small study group dedicated to members' self-improvement. The building also served as the village's first motion picture theater. Involved throughout the years in environmental and humanistic concerns, on both the local and national level, the club remains a strong, enduring force within Saratoga's social and cultural community.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1914-15. The construction was begun in the summer of 1914, and completed in May 1915.

2. Architect: Julia Morgan (1872-1957).

Julia Morgan was one of the most prominent architects in the Bay region during the first half of the twentieth century. She was born in San Francisco in 1872 and spent her childhood in Oakland. Her career as an architecture student is historically as important as her architectural practice. Entering the University of California at Berkeley in 1890, Morgan was the first woman to graduate from the School of Engineering, receiving her degree in 1894. At Berkeley, she studied for a year under geometry professor Bernard Maybeck, the person who most deeply influenced her in her decision to pursue architecture as a profession. Maybeck urged Morgan to apply to Paris' Ecole des Beaux-Arts, in spite of the fact that the school did not accept women. Nevertheless, she applied, accompanied by a strong recommendation from Maybeck - a former graduate of the school - as well as other influential sponsors. With no firm commitment from the school she traveled to Paris, commencing on a year of strenuous entrance examinations. At the end of that year she was accepted, and in 1901, Morgan became the first woman to receive a certificate from the Beaux Arts.

Morgan's biographer, Richard Longstreth, writes that Morgan believed that "the architect should be a semi-anonymous contributor to a team whose efforts were dictated by people's spiritual needs . . . an assertive use of form violated the master-servant relationship between life and architecture." (Julia Morgan Architect, 1922) The common ingredient which linked the body of her designs together was the architect's use of historical precedent: ancient styles were the resources from which her creative ideas sprang. At the same time, Morgan stated, a building's overall character was not the offspring of its ornamental details. Rather, exterior appearances were a direct expression of the building's interior structural elements. Her buildings were designed from the inside out, with the structural materials as vital, integral parts of the design. So as to avoid composing for visual effect, Morgan always sketched the preliminary drawings with a T-square and triangle, by contrast to the more conventional technique of completing a perspective drawing first.

All the firm's working drawings were completed from her design sketches, and she was the sole contact between the firm and the client. While her office was organized on the atelier system, in which she served as teacher as well as employer, most of the architects who started with Morgan in the early decades of the century remained with her throughout their careers. By 1927, six out of the fourteen members in Morgan's office were women. For an established profession, this number is remarkable, especially in the years before the Depression of the 1930s, the time when women first began to enter the job market in large numbers.

If Morgan in fact did possess a philosophy about her work it was that architecture was a visual art, not a verbal one: the building spoke for itself. Steadfastly adhering to her desire for anonymity, promoting the individual building's identity, Morgan wrote nothing during her life. She granted no personal interviews, and in 1957, just before she died, she destroyed all available records of her practice - sketches, ledgers, notebooks and drawings.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located upon the property which consists of Lot 1 and six feet of Lot 2, in Block 2 of the Saratoga Park subdivision. The land was given to the club in May 1914 by Mrs. George A. Wood and Mrs. Davis C. Bell. The transaction was recorded May 13, 1939, when both quit claim deeds were executed.
4. Original plan and construction: The original set of blueprints drawn by Julia Morgan, are in the possession of the Foothill Club. The set consists of ten sheets, including the northwest, southwest, southeast and northeast elevations, transverse and cross sections, main floor plan, foundation plan and building details. These sheets have been traced and reproduced as measured drawings for the HABS Collection.

On January 7, 1915, the "Saratoga Record" noted the opening of the new clubhouse, describing it in detail.

A low, shingled structure of the bungalow type, its interior shows the soft hue of unstained redwood. Particularly to be commended is the well-proportioned stage, which with its cozy book shelves in the corner and its comparatively small dimensions can easily be made to represent a most delightful room of almost any character. Opposite the large bay window which floods with the sunlight the roomy and comfortable reception hall is the motion picture booth. . . Also opposite the bay window is the dining room, which is in reality an alcove or wing of the main hall. On this side is the old-fashioned open fireplace, which is perhaps the most attractive feature of the building."

5. Alterations and additions: Since its construction in 1915, the clubhouse has required constant and costly maintenance: replacement of woodwork, oiling of exterior shingles, and replacement of sections damaged by termites and dry rot. The Club's membership has sponsored many fund-raising projects to finance the upkeep and alterations, and the Mens Club, organized in 1918, has also provided financial support for many of the building's improvements.

- 1921 The fireplace in the Assembly Room heated the building until this year when funds were raised for a furnace. The 1921 furnace was replaced in 1955.
- 1923 A doorway was opened from the dining room into what was the original motion picture booth and by 1923 had been remodeled as the kitchen pantry.
- 1925 The kitchen was fueled by wood or coal until March 1925, at which time it was electrified. The present kitchen utilities date from the 1950s.
- 1936 The major change to the original structure was the addition of space to the stage, stage room, kitchen and men's dressing room. The latter was enlarged to provide a room in which guests could wait during business meetings. Also, the interior pergola which extended across the Assembly Room's northwest side was removed, the dining room was remodeled, and other minor repairs were completed at this time. Julia Morgan drew up the plans early in 1936, and the project was finished by November 1936 at a cost of \$2200.
- 1974 In January 1974 a windstorm blew in the center section of the auditorium's circular rose window, breaking six of the original panes. Because the old rose glass was not replaceable, crinkle amber glass, obtained from a supply in the basement of the Saratoga Federated Church, was substituted.

B. Historic Persons and Events Connected with the Structure:

The Foothill Study Club, the oldest social organization in Saratoga, began in 1907 as a small woman's study group dedicated to members' self-improvement through reading and public speaking. Before the present clubhouse was erected in 1914-15, the women met in private homes. To raise the necessary building funds, the study club merged with a holding company, adopting the name Saratoga Foothill Club. The holding company, established prior to the town's incorporation, held title to the Town Plaza for thirty-five years until the early 1940s.

In addition to its use as the Foothill Club's home, the clubhouse served as Saratoga's first motion picture theater, as had been promised to the townspeople when money was being raised for the building's construction. One of the club's community services included a motion picture committee which rated the movies' content and subject matter.

The club was involved in a wide array of community projects. In 1918 it campaigned for improved roads in the county, and in later years supported the by-passing of Saratoga by the State Highway. Other contributions have included continuing aid to the needy since 1931, support

to youth activities since 1934, and fund-raising for county welfare. In recent years, it has lobbied against the rapid proliferation of roadside billboards, and the club gave the town a section of the clubhouse's front path, enabling Saratoga to widen Park Place.

On a national scale, the Foothill Club has been active on a continuous basis in many different concerns of the day. Jane Adams, nationally prominent social worker and founder of Chicago's Hull House, spoke here in May 1918 during a tour of the West on behalf of Hoover's Food Conservation Commission. During World War I, members raised money for the Red Cross and knitted socks for a hospital based in Palo Alto. After the war, the Club became interested in Herbert Hoover's work with the Children of Europe, helping residents of Saratoga to fund relief work on that continent. In 1921, it joined forces with California's "Save the Redwood League," urging the passage of the Redwood Preservation Bill which created funds to purchase endangered redwoods. Members' concern for the conservation of natural resources extended to the preservation of National Parks and Monuments, protesting the proposed amendment of the Water Power Act which could have excluded landmark parklands.

In December 1941, soon after the United States' entry into World War II, the Foothill Clubhouse was used as the Headquarters for the 31st Field Artillery Division, under the direction of Major Burbach. The company occupied the building for two-and-a-half months, necessitating thorough cleaning and repair before it was used as a workshop for the construction of war materials. The Foothill Club remains to the present day a strong, enduring force within Saratoga's social and cultural community.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

General view of Foothill Club, n.d., from photograph collection of Saratoga Museum, Saratoga. Photocopied for HABS collection.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Sara Boutelle, Julia Morgan scholar, 130 Gethcell Street, Santa Cruz, California.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Beach, John, "The Bay Area Tradition 1890-1918," in Bay Area Houses, Sally Woodbridge, ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

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Hawaii Architect, June 1979, pp. 12-13.

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Saratoga Foothill Club, 1978.

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Prepared by Jan E. Cigliano  
Architectural Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1979

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Foothill Club is a very successful solution to the problem of designing a clubhouse in a residential neighborhood. Its low, horizontal and small-scaled design and the straightforward redwood construction blends in with the residential neighborhood.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The one-story building measures approximately 74' across the front (northwest) facade by 60' deep, with projections at several points around the buildings. A trellis extends 70' to the sidewalk fronting Park Place on the southwest.
2. Foundations: The foundations are nine-inch poured concrete walls. A drainage and ventilation ditch surrounds most of the structure, extending about 6" below grade and lined on the bottom with stones. The foundation is penetrated by small, screened-in ventilation openings. A baseboard covers most of the foundation, except where the ground level drops to form the drainage ditch.

3. Wall construction, finish and color: The exterior walls are covered with natural redwood shakes, placed in horizontal bands and alternately exposed 3"-by-12" and 3"-by-3-1/2".
4. Structural system and framing: Wooden framing with 2-by-4 inch studs. The corner posts are 6-by-6 inch beams.
5. Roof: The roof consists of two gables, set at a right angle to one another. The gable which runs 61 feet northwest-southeast covers the Assembly Room. It is a large wooden and metal truss structure. The second gable runs southwest to northeast and is 48 feet long. The main roofs are covered with three-foot shakes, exposed one foot to the weather. The front southwest side entry bays are protected by flat roofs, trimmed with trellis-work around the eaves.
6. Porches: The front entry vestibule projects 7'-4" beyond the northwest facade. It is topped by a flat bracketed bungalow style roof and fronted by flanking wooden benches. Extending out from the southwest (side) rear doorway is a bracketed redwood trellis, creating a naturally protected walkway. A raised porch with a plain redwood railing and balusters fronts the southeast (side) and northeast (rear) doorways.
7. Chimneys: One chimney serves the dining room fireplace and is located on the southeast side of the northeast-southwest ridge. A second chimney serves the basement furnace and is located on the northeast side of the intersecting gable.
8. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entry has double redwood panel doors with an attached carved ornament on each, and a redwood panel overhead with the club's name inscribed. Three additional exterior doors are framed by plain trim and have four to ten lights.
  - b. Windows: Each of the three large Assembly Room openings on the northwest facade are filled with three window sets; each set includes a nine-light window with a three-light transom overhead. Of the three window sets, only one in each opening is operable; the remaining two are fixed. Most of the other windows around the building are grouped in the same manner, with the exception of the windows on the northeast (side) and those in the service and stage room, which are six-light casements. A large circular multi-paned rose window is set in the Assembly Room's northwest gable. In the center is a four-light pivoting window.



C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a partial basement under the stage area and a small furnace room extending under the Assembly Room. Access to the basement is through an exterior door at the rear of the dining room bay. The remainder of the basement is crawl space.
- b. Main floor: The main floor is dominated by the Assembly Room (33'-9" x 40'-3"). Adjoining the Assembly Room on axis to the main entry, are three rooms of equal width - the vestibule, the hall, and the dining room. This axis culminates in the projecting bay of the dining room. To the southeast of the entry is a thirty-four foot wide service area, including kitchen and two pantries, the men's and ladies' dressing and rest rooms, and a rear service door. Rooms flank each side of the stage, one to its northeast and two to the southwest. On the southwest is a storage room, and the stage room with a side entry.
2. Stairways: With the exception of the three risers leading to the stage there are no interior stairways.
3. Flooring: Hardwood boarding covers all principal rooms. The vestibule and dressing rooms have been carpeted. The kitchen, pantry and lavatories are covered with sheet linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Redwood paneling extends ten feet up from the baseboard, and plaster covers the area between the paneling and ceiling in the principal rooms. In the Assembly Room, redwood strips are laid over plaster to suggest half-timber construction. An additional truss is suggested in the framing above the stage. The stage storage room is unfinished with the ceiling and wall framing exposed. The service rooms are all painted plaster. Wallpaper covers the dressing room walls. The Assembly Room ceiling is an exposed wood-and-iron truss with exposed redwood decking. All other rooms are covered with acoustical tiles.
5. Doorways and doors: The doors complement the wood paneling pattern in the hall and dining room. An exception to this is the Dutch door to the left of the dining room fireplace. Two sets of accordion doors, with three-and-a-half doors in each set, are between the dining and assembly rooms. The remaining doors in the principal rooms glass-paneled French doors, varying in the number and size of the lights.
6. Hardware: Most of the window and door hardware is brass and quite simple in design.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Lighting: The Assembly is lighted by large cylindrical hanging lamps with incandescent bulbs. Also, flood lights are attached to the ceiling trusses. Most of the building is lighted by hanging incandescent fixtures. The service area has fluorescent lighting. The stage has a single row of stationary floodlights.
- b. Heating: A central hot air furnace in the basement is connected to floor registers in the main rooms.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The clubhouse is set in a residential neighborhood several blocks away from Saratoga's commercial district. The building stands on a street-corner site, facing southwest.
2. Historic landscape design: The grounds were first landscaped in April 1918. In 1949, and again during 1965-66 the garden was renovated, the landscaping expanded and new trees and shrubs were planted. A sidewalk approaching the clubhouse from the street was laid in 1966. During the summer of 1975, the northeast (side) garden was converted into a patio: slabs of aggregate concrete were poured, divided by bricks from the 1966 sidewalk, and low ground cover plantings and other ornamental plants completed the natural landscape design. Redwood benches, secured into concrete bases, line the patio edges. Today, the garden is contained within a large quarter circle, extending around a part of the building's northeast (side) and the southwest (rear). A trellis extends the length of the garden, from the northeast doorway towards the rear to the sidewalk on the southwest.

Prepared by Robert Clarke  
Architectural Technician  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1978

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the County of Santa Clara. The 1978 summer project, the second year of a three-year project in Santa Clara County, was completed under the general direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; Kenneth L. Anderson, Jr., Principal Architect; and Robert Brueggmann, Project Supervisor (University of Illinois,)

Chicago Circle); with Jack Schafer, Architectural Foreman (University of Cincinnati); and student architect Robert E. Clarke (University of Notre Dame), Barbara M. Friedman (University of Pennsylvania), Julia H. Miner (Yale University), and John B. Murphy (Texas Tech University), at the HABS Field Office in Saratoga, California. The drawings were edited in the HABS Washington office during the summer of 1979 by David T. Marsh. The historical and architectural data was researched and written during the summer of 1979 by Jan Cigliano, an architectural historian on the HABS staff, at the 1979 HABS Field Office in Santa Clara, California. Photographs were taken by Jane Lidz in the summer of 1980.